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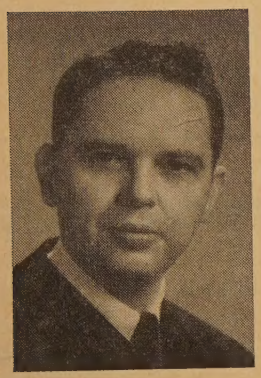
The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching



James Clark Brown:
What Makes a Nation Great

William E. Hulme • Thanksgiving and the Common Life

Villiam Archer Wright, Jr. • What God Gives

William Summerscales • For All Thy Saints

Everett W. Palmer • Lest Patriotism Become Idolatry

RONALD E. OSBORN
UP FROM EMANCIPATION

OL. XXXI, No. 11 NOVEMBER 1960

The Pulpit

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Nov. 13 — Stewardship Day.
Nov. 20 — Thanksgiving Sunday.
Nov. 24 — Thanksgiving Day.
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Jan. 6 — Epiphany.
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Jan. 15 — Missionary Day.
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Jan. 22 — 3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 29 — 4th Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 29 – Feb. 5 — Youth Week.

PULPIT POST

On Tilson's Thesis

SIR: Concerning the sermon by Everett Tilson (August), "Segregation and the Ten Commandments": I am interested to know if the author had the courage of his convictions. Did he preach this sermon while he was in Tennessee or is this a product out of Ohio? I reserve my judgment on the sermon until I find out whether the man was speaking to a situation from within or from without. . . .

JERALD FURGURSON
St. Luke's Lutheran Church
Spokane, Wash.

[*The author deserves and gratefully receives your congratulations. — Ed.*]

SIR: I commend Everett Tilson on his sermon in the August issue.

Especially am I pleased to see someone point to the real problem in race relations. . . . I have heard and read so much about the superficial problems involved in integration, whereas the real problem lies elsewhere. When we learn not to rob the Negro of the respect and dignity due him as a human being, and when we learn not to thwart the ambition of a Negro child or youth (and mine would be if I were Negro), then perhaps we can abide by the law of the land.

W. H. KIRBY
Wallace Methodist Church
Wallace, N. C.

The Pulpit

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he Bible and the Ballot

WHILE the controversy over the religious affiliation of presidential candidates remains the air it would be well for ministers to remind emselves that there are some things far more esntial to the survival of Protestantism than is the ligious faith of the President. If, for example, the reservation of the Protestant idea is for us a priary concern, then it is more important to Protesntism to keep the Bible in the hearts of the people an it is to keep a Roman Catholic out of the White House. The Protestant idea and the Protesnt practice can survive under a President who appens to be of the Roman Catholic faith. They annot survive if the people who call themselves rotestants continue to be biblical illiterates. Although he did not have the current religious issue n mind, P. T. Forsyth in his *Positive Preaching and he Modern Mind* spoke to it forcefully: "To retore to the people an intelligent and affectionate se of the Bible is a service to Protestantism far nore needed than those violent and ill-informed denunciations of the priest which are so easy and so heap." For many Protestants the tactic of the hour s to prevent the election of a Roman Catholic to he presidency, by fair means or foul, and thus, as they see it, save the country for Protestantism. Whether this is wise or not, will work or not, it will certainly not save Protestantism for the country. The Protestant idea is biblically oriented. It does not preach the Bible, but it does preach a gospel which is communicated and supported by the Bible. Its vitality depends not upon the religious complexion of the White House but upon the extent to which the Bible is known and used by its laity. Where the Protestant laity does not know and does not use the Scriptures, the Catholic idea of the ministry and of the church is on the way and will not be stopped by keeping a Protestant figure at the head of the nation. Protestants have the right to vote as they please; they have the right to repudiate either candidate; they have, as citizens, the right to take their religious preferences into the ballot box with them. But it is certainly irrational and inconsistent to elect one man rather than the other for religious reasons while simultaneously we neglect that religious enterprise which will do more than anything else to preserve the religious idea, principle and practice to which we are committed. The future of Protestantism will be determined not so much by what we do with the ballot as by what we do with the Bible.

Our task as ministers is in this respect much more difficult than it was for the reformers in the early days of the Reformation. In those times the laity did not have the Bible but wanted it; in our times the laity has the Bible but does not want it. In those days Bibles were rare and therefore precious; in our day Bibles are commonplace and neglected. In the days of the Reformers reading time was abundant; today listening and viewing time has cut seriously into reading time. The difficulties faced by ministers who want their people to be at home in the Bible are compounded by bibliolatry on the one side and by the cynical criticisms which reduce the Bible to a mere book on the other. It will not be easy "to restore to the people an intelligent and affectionate use of the Bible." The persistence and the ingenuity with which we rise to meet this challenge will be the measure of our earnestness in preserving and propagating the gospel as it has been entrusted to us.

In gratitude many ministers have turned from time to time to the American Bible Society, not only because of its wholesale distribution of Bibles but also because of its awareness that the distribution of Bibles is not enough. Getting the Bible into the hands of the people is one thing; getting it into their heads and hearts is another. This must be done — the Society offers many aids — directly and indirectly by the minister in his teaching role. From the American Bible Society, 450 Park Avenue, New York 22, he can receive valuable suggestions and programs for the special and daily reading of the Bible. But it is his responsibility to shape these programs to the needs of his own people. His own mood as he confronts the Bible, his persistence and inventiveness in teaching it to his people, his training of teachers who complement his own teaching program, his preaching of sermons which are always biblically based but never obscure — this will do more to preserve Protestantism as a vessel of God's grace and his gospel than anything he could ever say about the presidential election. KYLE HASELDEN

What Makes a Nation Great

By James Clark Brown

WHAT MAKES a nation great? "Greatness," wrote Matthew Arnold in speaking of England, "is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest and admiration." By the judgment of such a definition our nation can make certain impressive claims; she has evoked from within her sons and daughters a response of heroic and sacrificial love. In the document declaring America's independence as a nation, Jefferson put into words what he and all of our nation's heroes have put into costly deeds: "We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." Our nation has had from the time of its beginning the impassioned love of her best and bravest sons and daughters.

More than love, "greatness is a spiritual condition worthy to excite interest and admiration." Surely "interest" is too mild a word to describe the motives which enabled the first Pilgrims and their successors ever since to be prepared to sacrifice and to suffer and to endure all kinds of hardship in order to set foot on our nation's shores. America has indeed aroused the interest of others; for her best achievements she has received from other peoples throughout the world admiration, and justly so, which has been the envy of our enemies and an inspiration to our friends.

Two of our recent ambassadors to India have made so impressive an identification with the people in terms of sympathy and understanding of Indian problems that American prestige remains high there despite whatever mistakes we may have made otherwise. One Indian family actually sold its only ox in order to have money enough for its members to journey to India's capital city to see a visiting President of the United States — to them the highest symbol of a nation whom they greatly admired. Wherever such admiration still exists, God help us to be humbled by it and continually to seek to deserve it.

Dissent from Complacency

Granted that there have been and are within our national life evidences of those qualities which confirm Matthew Arnold's definition of greatness, voices of persons who also deeply love this land and who pray God's continuing blessing upon it would vigorously issue a dissent. Here are the words of Justice William Douglas, speaking to students at Princeton University:

> We Americans are at a fateful crossroads of history. We are smug and complacent as we enjoy the highest standard of living in the world. Yet we drift dangerously; and if present trends continue, we will be a second-rate power in the world. We [Americans] are as those who live in the big white house on the hill that is quite distant in thoughts and actions from the slums below us and around us. Only 15 per cent of the people of the world earn more than $450 a year. The vast majority live out their lives below what we of the West think of as the subsistence level. (The average annual income in the United States is more than $2,000 as against less than $100 for a third of the world's population.) In foreign affairs we have developed a keen sense of negativism. We are opposed to this and that; we are wholly anticommunist. We do not see the world's problems in affirmative terms. We have no vision of the new world that is in revolution and sorely needs leaders.

James Reston, the distinguished Washington bureau chief of the *New York Times,* is reported to have returned from speaking to the students at one of our most famous colleges deeply distressed. He said in effect that he was forced to conclude from his encounter with the most privileged and scholastically sophisticated students in American colleges that they possess almost everything except courage, particularly moral courage. They have no commitment to great causes, he said; their questions and discussions betray their chief concern as being how best to advance to the next higher step in the ladder of personal comfort and security. If this be a valid assessment of American college youth, are not their parents even more to blame?

The late A. Powell Davies, a fearless preacher and prophet of the 20th century, said in words that are as true today as when he spoke them:

> The fact is that even at best — even if we do well — our task is immense: greater perhaps than any nation has ever undertaken before us. Civilization and perhaps mankind itself will be blotted out within the present

---

JAMES CLARK BROWN *is a graduate of Phillips University in Oklahoma and of the Yale Divinity School. Twice awarded the Woolcot-Calkins prize for public preaching while at Yale, he has served pastorates in New Haven, Conn., and Los Angeles, California, and is beginning his third year as minister of the Cleveland Park Congregational Church, Washington, D. C. Between his last two pastorates Mr. Brown served as an administrative assistant to the Clerk of the House of Representatives, reflecting a lifetime interest in the processes of American government. He has been a chapel preacher at Vassar, Penn State, Dwight Chapel at Yale, and was a recent delegate to the White House Conference on Refugees.*

generation unless we find the wisdom to prevent it. We need calmness of judgment and deliberation. We need steadiness. We need patience and endurance. We need faith in God and in ourselves and one another. We need all the resources of our minds and hearts, and our need is greater than ever before in history.

I remind you of God's word spoken through Amos to Israel but no less relevant to America today: "Woe to those who are at ease . . . and to those who feel secure. For unless you turn from evil and seek good I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation, I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day. O people, hate evil, love good, establish justice, and then the Lord, the God of hosts will be gracious unto you."

"We Hold These Truths"

Let us think together in positive terms of how we may more truly deserve and achieve greatness within our lives and land. *One mark of a nation's true greatness is that its people and leaders passionately believe in and seek to establish on earth those ideas which bring dignity and hope to people throughout the world.* In the finest hours of our personal and national life we have believed passionately in such ennobling ideas and have sought to establish them on earth. Who says we cannot, if we truly will to do so, return to so heroic a faith? Here, for example, is an idea which has ennobled man's life and which in our hours of true greatness has been identified with America: The idea that *every person in any part of the world is by reasons of his creation in the image of God deserving of freedom with justice.*

You and I would not now be members of this nation had there not been men and women before us who passionately believed in that idea. At what cost and with what greatness of spirit did other Americans say to themselves: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"?

Do you and I passionately believe in that idea today? Oh, I know that we regularly repeat it, we print it on paper, we frame and display it in our schools and civic clubs and churches. But I repeat: Do you and I today passionately believe in the idea that every person in every part of the world is by reason of his creation in the image of God deserving of freedom with justice?

Unsupported Affirmation

If you tell me that you believe our nation, and you personally, do believe in that idea passionately, then tell me now how you reconcile such an affirmation with the fact that in a year set aside by 60 nations to recognize and substantially remedy the continuing plight of three million homeless persons whose only offense has been to despise communism, our leaders have not challenged us to do more than we have done. Congress will always do what the people passionately desire, or what an immensely popular President strongly insists upon. Yet one member of the Congress told a group of us recently that there is simply little interest among the people for legislation to admit additional refugees to this country. Well, so be it, but let's be more honest about saying how passionately we believe in the idea of desiring for others as well as ourselves freedom with justice.

The vast continent of Africa, like much of the world, is in turmoil and revolution, with peoples struggling and suffering to achieve what we say we believe in: "freedom with justice for every person." Yet as late as 1958 the total of American government aid to Africa to encourage education and agricultural research, to help in developing the continent's natural resources — in brief, the amount of our total government aid to help Africa's people help themselves to achieve freedom with justice, amounted to only $77 million. That is less than what we as a country spent for hula-hoops during one six-month period that year.

We need to become hungry to learn the truth. We need to learn about the circumstances under which millions of the world's people are living and suffering simply in order to achieve the freedom with justice which we so complacently possess. We need to go without food for a single day in order to realize more personally that most of the world's people go without sufficient food every day while we spend $480 million a year just to store our surplus foods and grains. We need leaders who will plan boldly and challenge us daringly to achieve that greatness which is the world's need. I asked a Latvian lady who sat next to me at a dinner the other night: "Do you have any optimism about your country eventually regaining its freedom?" She replied: "That will largely depend on what you in the United States do." We need, in Amos' words, to hate evil and complacency and selfishness and to love good and human dignity both for ourselves and others so that "justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream."

The Time Is Now!

A second mark of greatness which characterizes a nation and its people is a sense of responsible recognition that life may not always afford us the opportunity which we now have to do wise and heroic deeds. Science has shrunk our world by improving the means of travel and communication. Literally, we no longer conduct "foreign affairs." The world has become too small to think of anyone anywhere as "foreign." All persons, everywhere, are our neighbors with whom we must live peacefully or seek to do so, or else we will not live at

all. Today we are only 30 minutes from Moscow by intercontinental ballistic missile.

What is the relevance of all this to our Christian faith and the world's struggle for freedom with justice? Simply that it is folly to assume that we have the time to continue holding on to our complacencies, our prejudices and our apathy when ranged against us is an enemy possessed of a fanatical enthusiasm, discipline and daring which seeks to win the world to its banner.

Quite simply, the challenge laid upon us is to return to a passionate belief in and demonstration of those beliefs which bring dignity and hope to people throughout the world, and to begin doing so today, recognizing that life may not always afford us the opportunity which we now have to do wise and heroic deeds. How poignantly relevant is the lament: "I wish that I could stand on a busy street corner, hat in hand, and beg people to throw me all their wasted hours." Money and time are the heaviest burdens of life, and the unhappiest of all mortals are those who have more of either than they know how to use. In October 1948 Sir Winston Churchill said in a speech: "No one in his senses can believe that we have a limitless period of time before us. We ought not to go jogging along, improvident, incompetent, waiting for something to turn up by which is meant waiting for something bad for us to turn up." Our Lord has said, "We must work while it is day; night comes, when no one can work."

O God, for what we have done in error or failed to do, forgive us; for what we yet may do to establish justice upon the earth, quicken and strengthen us; and in all that we do, purify and sustain us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE MOURNERS BENCH

By G. Hobab Kish

I NEVER cease to marvel at the number of meetings people will attend. That anyone would ever go to any gathering which did not demand his presence is more than I can understand. The sweetest sentence in the English language is: Brethren, I'm not going.

There was a time when I thought it was necessary to attend every meeting in the church and the community. The service club found me eating the worst lunch of the week, every Friday. I am glad, however, that I never did get so low down as to keep perfect attendance for a year. If there was a committee of the Chamber of Commerce or the Community Chest, they could count on me. If the Women's Guild needed an invocation or a benediction, I was their boy. No banquet was complete without the pastor of Central Church at the head table.

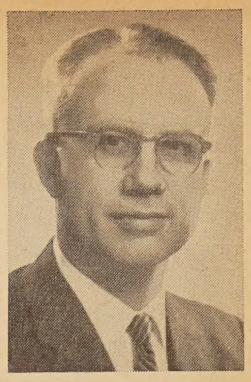
Now all of this brought great satisfaction to the deacons. They said it was good to have a preacher who was community minded. They thought it did the church a lot of good to be represented in all sorts of affairs. One fellow became quite put out with me because I refused to go out on Saturday night, since I was out every other night. And it seemed to me that my ministry was a success because I was getting about.

One day, it came to me that enough was enough. All of a sudden the thought of another luncheon made me ill. To contemplate another long committee meeting out of which nothing would come, drove me into a state of melancholia. To watch the precious minutes fly by while some well-meaning but not very bright chairman fumbled around, appeared an ordeal I could no longer endure. In the modern parlance, I had had it.

Then a strange thing took place. I quit going to meetings. Politely but firmly, I swore off. There were times when the old habit nearly conquered me, but if you will forgive what may sound like boasting, I fought it bravely. And I won!

Now comes the strangest thing of all. It really did not seem to matter very much to the community or to the church. There were others who took my place. There were substitutes on every hand and the meetings continued on the same level. My church went forward as before without any noticeable falling off of the congregation nor any loss of personal prestige. When I checked up on the meetings which I no longer attended, I found as expected, that hardly ever had I missed anything.

Oh, I still get caught once in a while, in spite of all my efforts. But one learns to smell boredom from afar and run in the other direction. A fellow discovers all kinds of ways to sneak out when the wind is dry and hot with no promise of rain. One flees instinctively from panel discussions, buzz sessions, and sharing experiences. And in his own study, or in his own home, or with a friend, he lets God restore him to sanity. The gospel is meeting, but on the peril of your soul, never add an 's' to what the gospel is.



Up from Emancipation

By Ronald E. Osborn

IT MUST be understood at the outset that I regard myself, with due modesty of course, as wholly enlightened and emancipated. And while the confession I am about to make is cast in personal terms, my situation is not unique. Though a professor who has crossed the threshold of middle age, I see myself as a typical member of the contemporary seminary community, and I speak not of my own private spiritual condition but of the inward plight of the modern theological sophisticate, wherever he may be found.

I have fallen under the influences which have shaped the thinking of a ministerial generation. I have been exposed, belatedly, to Kierkegaard and Berdyaev; I have read my share of Barth and Niebuhr and Tillich and Bultmann. I know that now I must dig into Bonhoeffer and Thielecke. All this entitles me to feel a considerable sense of intellectual superiority toward my friends of Bible College days and the members of my congregation who cling to the traditional concepts of religion, and especially toward those ministers in later middle age who still hold to liberalism and think in terms enunciated by Harry Emerson Fosdick.

Not only do I feel superior to all this: my spiritual-intellectual autobiography is the story of rebellion against it. For I was not emancipated easily. Now I find myself standing within, but in some measure also over against, a Christian community which perpetuates traditions from which I have been delivered. So at times I am uncomfortable within the church, and frequently a bit lonely, though I console myself with assurances of my superiority. Such intellectual arrogance has its rewards; yet the loneliness is on occasion, I must confess, a bit frightening. Still I must be willing to climb the dizzy heights of freedom. And as I press on I find myself reflecting how my character has been formed by the inherited formulations of Christian thought and by my struggle to be free of them. Consider the proclamation of my spiritual emancipation.

I

To begin with, I have affirmed my liberation from puritanism. I speak here of the fundamental tradition in American religion, altered by the passing of more than three centuries since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers but still a major element in the spiritual environment in which I was reared. Christianity was an austere sort of faith which frowned on all sinful pleasures and darkly suspected any sort of pleasure at all. Church people were expected to abstain from every evident form of wickedness, a thing not too difficult to manage since the prevailing sins were held to be drinking, dancing, card-playing, theater-going, and wearing shorts at a Christian youth camp. It was generally understood that leaders in the church would refrain from smoking and from profane or vulgar speech. The more zealous not only governed their own lives by the negative code here suggested but sought to impose their standard of conduct on the community at large.

Now I have struck off the shackles of puritanism. I have come to see that it often results psychologically in harmful repression and religiously in self-righteousness. My mind is too wholesome, my spirit too clear of illusion for any of that. I know how to let myself go — within limits of course. I learned to play cards as a symbol of my emancipation, and on occasion to smoke for the same reason though finding little intrinsic pleasure in it. I say "hell" and "damn" rather more often than is good for the vigor of my English style and enjoy a type of funny story which once was not told in polite company. Indeed I consider it my duty to read certain novels once thought scandalous in order to know what people are thinking. When traveling I no longer drive to the next town to avoid eating

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in a restaurant which serves liquor, though I do not drink wine — except in Europe. I understand that alcoholism is a disease, that sex is natural and wholesome, and my nose is not blue.

To be perfectly honest, though, I sometimes wonder if the population in general has not lost all sense of moral standards. In my more thoughtful moments I am troubled by the blatant exploitation of sex in contemporary America, by the increase of gross and profane speech, by the sensational appeal to the vulgar in literature. In any case, we will not go back to puritanism with its long face and high collar and stiff neck. Relax, man. Let yourself go.

I must add that by now I am pretty well freed from the influence of that pietism which for so long pervaded religious life in this country. I have not been untouched by the ideal of fervent personal spirituality which once was so strong, with its emphasis on daily Bible reading, family devotions, going to prayer meeting, giving oneself to periods of fervid free prayer in public worship, examining one's spiritual condition, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world. These practices were all part of the spiritual culture in which I was reared, and I have not wholly abandoned them, not as much as many seminarians I know. But I must confess that my inner life lacks the sense of elation which once characterized the earnest Christian.

I have too many questions about the life of prayer in a world of science, especially in a world so conscious of psychology, to give myself unreservedly to the kind of devotion which antedated our present sophistication. I have learned how to get prayers for public worship from a book, and while I admit there is a kind of formality here which does not often rise to the spiritual heights of thoughtful free prayer at its best, I find that these prayers written by others surpass in meaning what I — or my ministerial colleagues — ordinarily put forth in *ex tempore* prayer. I am particularly annoyed by the clichés of pietistic conversation. When a well meaning brother murmurs "God bless you" after a church service I break into a sweat, and when Billy Graham closes a broadcast with his trademark, "And may the Lord bless you real good," I ask in irritation, "How corny can you get?" I confess that as the old pietistic practices wither away, I wonder about the state of spirituality in our contemporary churches with their biblical illiteracy, the formalizing or elimination of prayer life, the constant committee meetings and the shallow kind of fellowship cultivated at the endless round of dinners and parties. Yet I am sure that the old pietism is not the answer. I have freed myself from regarding my soul as a spiritual hothouse plant to be forced into bloom by superheated devotional practices and sheltered from all contact with the real world. I am emancipated from pietism.

I am also emancipated from biblicism. I am a Protestant, and my particular spiritual forefathers used to speak of our folk as pre-eminently "the people of the Book." The old-timers in our churches could give a chapter-and-verse for everything we did and demanded a prooftext for every proposed innovation. The Bible was the infallible Word of God, and all man had to do was obey. It is a far cry from this old "cover-to-cover" faith to the knowledge of the Bible which I share with others in the seminary community. The impact of natural science, of evolutionary thought, of historical criticism, of form criticism, of demythologizing, have left us with a Bible utterly unlike the Book our mothers read.

I find that the Bible is still a powerful emotional symbol and that a good many ministers — perhaps even I — resort to a prooftext when trying to dragoon reluctant laymen into the support of missions or the practice of tithing. I read the new biblical theologians with mingled feelings, sometimes of gratitude that a scholar so evidently sophisticated and well-informed still finds so much relevant truth in the Bible, at other times of exasperation that a pious commentator has ignored the whole critical enterprise. While I confess that the passing of the old-line generally recognized authority of the Bible has left popular Protestantism with a gaping hole in its foundations, I must say in all honesty that the old biblicism is washed up and I cannot seek to revive it.

II

Along with biblicism I am emancipated from legalism. I realize how quickly historic Protestantism fell from its high concept of grace to an acceptance of the Bible as God's Law and how largely Christian living has subsequently been interpreted as the keeping of divine commands. As I consider my forebears, it seems that ethical decision was easy for them. They could readily find a "Thus-saith-the-Lord." The only question was one of willingness to obey. But I cannot be a legalist.

The old view of plenary inspiration went with my repudiation of biblicism. My study of history has shown the human sources, the changing character, and the historical relativity of biblical ideals of ethics. In contemporary life I am forced to confront moral decisions for which there is no certain guidance, no absolute wrong to repudiate utterly, no unequivocal right to choose gladly and gallantly. And theologically I know enough of St. Paul to recognize that a man cannot find peace by keeping the law.

But all this leaves me in a precarious ethical situation. My contemporaries and I operate within a general moral framework shaped by the now-vanished certainties. The prevailing code was formed by a common belief in the Ten Commandments, for example, as absolute, and in my superior non-

egalistic way I accept the general outlines of this ode. But when I am tempted to violate it at some oint, then I face a difficult struggle. I cannot arm nyself with the certainty of a divine command- nent. Though I accept the code as the distillation f the wisdom of the race, I know full well of all orts of historic and justifiable exceptions to it, ustifiable even in theological terms. My sophistica- ion permits me no easy answer.

So the struggle rages between my "illicit" desire nd my concern to do the right, and I must sadly onfess that my "victory," when I win one, has een influenced pretty largely by prudential mo- ives and a traditional sense of decency. There is othing heroic about it; I am not a man of iron ike the grand old legalists. And if this is my situa- ion as a religious professional, I shudder to think f the layman who faces temptation unarmed with egalistic weapons and protected far less by the lemands of propriety than I am as a minister. For ll that, however, I am emancipated from legalism.

III

Revivalism also, I must now firmly declare, be- ongs to my past. I acknowledge the large part which this movement played in the conversion of he nation and am moved like others by the haunt- ng memory of fateful moments when the church confronted men with decision affecting eternal des- iny. But I recognize the present irrelevance of the evivalist approach. Church members now con- stitute the majority of the population, and the accepted way of the church differs in no noticeable respect from the American way. So while the re- vivalist employs all the powerful sanctions of an earlier day, he is in effect asking the nonchurch member to complete his conformity by coming into the church. I notice that most of the people who respond to the pleas of the evangelist are church members already. Some of these are indeed trans- ferring their membership from their place of for- mer residence, but many are rootless sophisticates like myself, whose nostalgia for the old time reli- gion has grown so overpowering that they hit the sawdust trail once again in a vain effort to recover the elation of a spiritual exaltation long since lost.

Now I have been in situations where the old revivalist method and message still had some rele- vance. And on occasion I have wished I could bring it all back. There is a sense of exaltation in pleading "O sinner, come home!" and seeing men and women and young people move toward the altar. But I know full well the limitations of re- vivalism — its oversimplification of the Christian message, its exploitation of the needs and senti- ments of the "prospects," its putting into banal song a set of concepts which have little spiritual relevance to the plight of modern man (except when he gets too homesick and tries to deny that he is modern), its vulgarization of Christian wor- ship by the mood of the religious carnival, its perilous emphasis on numerical gains. The long- ing for the old way sometimes sweeps over me like the present nationwide nostalgia for the days of Mark Twain, but I know that I live in the late twentieth century, and I have broken the ties of revivalism on my spirit.

I am emancipated from denominationalism too. In earlier generations in America, each church was to a large degree a self-contained enclave within the Christian world, conscious of the existence of com- peting sects outside but giving them no real place in its own life and thought, except as their rivalry was a spur to more earnest effort to proclaim the truth. Many a denomination sought to interpret itself in absolute terms as the one true church of Christ. My own had such pronounced convictions at this point that it denied being a denomination at all; we had restored the "New Testament Church."

Ecumenical experience has given me a broader perspective and has emancipated me from the il- lusion of denominational absolutism, just as a more sophisticated study of the New Testament has de- livered me from the notion of restorationism. I am committed to the ecumenical ideal. Yet I must work largely within a denominational framework with Christians who still think of themselves as members of a denomination. How do I lead them to support the increasing program demands of our denomination without resorting to the old sectarian jingoism? And how do I inculcate in them a sense of commitment to the church, congregational or ecumenical, in terms which have contemporary meaning yet relate to their familiar tradition? I cannot be an old-fashioned denominationalist. I will not be an irresponsible ecumaniac. My tempta- tion is to pervert churchmanship into mere opera- tional success and to become an ecclesiastical "wheel."

IV

My struggle for emancipation has freed me from liberalism, though the struggle was more difficult because my own religious nurture was provided by a generation eagerly committed to the liberal gos- pel and my older colleagues in the ministry work within a liberal frame of reference. How superior I feel as I regard their incredibly naive presuppos- itions! For many of them persist in regarding human nature as inherently good or at least per- fectible. I hear them talking still about "building the Kingdom of God." And when they warble in their sermonic perorations about "love" as the so- lution to man's problems, I ask myself all too cynically if they know what they are talking about, if they actually think that this syrupy sentiment they so eagerly rhapsodize characterizes God or offers any hope for our barbaric age, if they have not utterly lost touch with reality. There is a deal

of liberalism left in me, and I dare not dismiss it lightly. But I cannot give myself to it as my father's generation did for reasons neither they nor I can fathom. For who really understands the generation just before him? Or just after?

Finally, I must confess that in practice I have given up about every form of idealism. Earlier generations were deeply stirred by visions of transforming human society. Their old slogans now seem so futile that they hardly even move me to regret: "The evangelization of the world in this generation," "The world must be made safe for democracy," "Christian youth building a new world." I have seen the collapse of every such ideal and have watched the Christian people of America, along with their fellow citizens, settle into the pursuit of materialistic comforts not because it excites their imagination but simply because no challenging alternative is offered to them. I know older ministers who, under the influence of the social gospel, aspired to be "prophets." The students I observe in seminary, while not wholly comfortable about it, seem to be preparing to become effective builders of the church as an institution, or pastoral counselors, or professors of theology — if ever there are vast enough faculties to accommodate such an army!

My conscience troubles me at times when I recall how eagerly and courageously my predecessors sought to overcome the social evils of exploitation, colonialism, war, the liquor traffic, racial injustice, and the like, and of my own negligible undertakings in these areas. But they were deluded by the belief that they would actually change the world. In my heart I would like to see their goals attained. But I am free from all illusion. I am not bitter. I am emancipated from idealism.

V

What now shall I say? As I reflect on my situation, on my emancipation from every characteristic structure of thought in my spiritual heritage, I am shocked into the recognition that every one of these structures has collapsed, at least potentially, and that I stand amid the ruins of every human possibility, even in religion. I see the ambiguities not only in the systems I have repudiated but also in my own intellectual sophistication. All at once I find myself where St. Paul found himself midway through the Epistle to the Romans: "The very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me." There is no religious system, no "ism," no human arrangement of things that can transcend the ambiguities of my existence and deliver me from myself.

All the old systems, securities, partial explanations are gone. My spiritual pride has departed. I wait alone, a naked, lonely, insecure man among three billion others on a small planet which may be doomed to demolition at any moment or may by great good fortune and the gracious providence of God survive for eons yet to come, spawning billions more like myself, with their own problems, their own insecurities, their own little selves on their hands. For all my destructive wisdom, I am only one of them, standing in icy loneliness and insecurity. Painfully self-conscious, analytical of my every motive, stripped by modern psychology of the possibility of ever acting without devastating reservations and self-doubt, I am left with nothing to trust, no glad cause to espouse, no unsullied banners to march under, no crusade, no historic assurance, no wave of the future.

And in this painful realization of my own situation, facing it honestly in all its implications, I find an old, old question rising strangely to my lips: "What must *I* do to be saved?" I confess that I used to find that question amusing as I heard it quoted by fervid revivalists with their legalistic answers, and I still insist as an emancipated intellectual that I had reason to be amused. But now I face it in all inward earnestness. I find myself one with the trembling jailer in Philippi after the earthquake, stumbling out of the dark to the feet of the apostle, and asking the question with abandon. I know something of the mood of the disciples in the storm-tossed boat who cried out in the night, "Save, Lord, or we perish."

Now perhaps I am ready for the gospel of Christ. Now I am in a position to grasp the meaning of Paul's triumphant affirmation in Romans: "God has done what the law . . . could not do." In his revelation of himself through Jesus Christ I discern the glorious mercy, the eternal assurance, the abiding reality of God. This far transcends every human system of theology or institution of religion. But only when I realize at the depth of my being the utter inadequacy of any human possibility as a refuge can I really hear this gospel.

Now indeed I am ready for a voice I had not known. It comes from above, and it says: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord" (Jer. 9:23-24).

Meditation Upon Seeing a Kite in Flight

The cross is hidden
by colored paper, and by
sermon manuscripts.

STANLEY LARSEN

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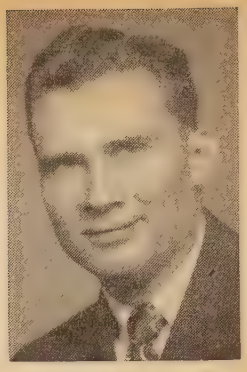

Thanksgiving and the Common Life

By William E. Hulme

For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer. 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

IT HAS been some 339 years since our Pilgrim Fathers set aside their season for feasting and thanksgiving and started an American custom which, practically speaking, is a national harvest festival. In making a church festival of Thanksgiving Day the church has followed the leadership of the government under Abraham Lincoln, and the government has followed the tradition of the Pilgrims. This is evident in our national pattern for celebrating the holiday. The thanksgiving is for the fruits of the earth and is directed — at least by implication — to the Creator God. The high point is the family-centered feasting in which overstuffing oneself is as much in vogue as it was on the first occasion.

Yet it is really not the same. There is the tradition — perhaps a legend — that on each plate of those original celebrators a few kernels of corn were placed to remind them of what the harvest had been like the year before. Certainly the way to appreciate daily bread — or anything else — is to know what it is like to do without it. But we have not had these belt-tightening years in recent times. Ours is actually the opposite problem. One of our major concerns is cutting down on our calories, and in our agricultural midwest the problem for years has been overproduction. In this most overfed nation in the world Thanksgiving Day is merely the day when we overstuff ourselves more than usual.

It is also difficult for us to celebrate Thanksgiving in the original spirit because it was a rural festival. While there are still large sections of our country where the rural life is the dominant life, we are becoming more and more an industrial society. Yet it is the abundance of the fall harvest that lies at the heart of our celebration, as the farmer, under God, takes satisfaction in the accomplishment of the work of his hands. In this setting, a national thanksgiving is more universal than specifically American. The Old Testament Feast of the Tabernacles was a fall harvest festival. Like our American Thanksgiving it had its background in the wilderness wanderings when the Israelites lived in tents, and it lasted for several days during which time the celebrators built little shelters on their land to remind them of the poorer days.

But can we not raise a religious objection to all of this centering of thanksgiving on daily bread — the ordinary, everyday life which we can call the common life? After all, man does not live by bread alone. Should we not raise our sights above the physical necessities of life and become more spiritually minded and thank God for himself and the blessings he has given to our *souls?* In spite of all the obvious spirituality in such an objection the answer from a Christian point of view is no. Nature — the fruits of earth, the realm of creation — is a mediator of God the Creator. He has ordained that this world of nature, our daily bread, the common life, should be the stimulus to Thanksgiving for us who partake of it. And thanksgiving is the noblest, the purest, the most spiritual of all human activities. Before we confess our faith in Jesus Christ his Son our Lord, we confess our faith in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. On this Thanksgiving Day when we thank God for his blessings in the common life, for the gifts of his creation, let us examine together God's plan for his creation. As we do we shall notice that God has made the necessities of life both desirable and sacramental.

I

God has made the common life desirable. As a wise Creator he works at both ends of the creative process. He creates what is needed and creates the

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desire for it. Take our human bodies for example. They need food to function. God created the food and in addition created an appetite for food within the human body so that the two would come together. The human race needs to perpetuate itself. So God created people as men and women and created within each an attraction for the other so that we have marriage and the family. God himself is needed for human living. So by his Holy Spirit he has placed within us a hunger and a thirst for him. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrook, so panteth my soul after Thee O God." All of this makes wholesome living natural.

Into this picture to spoil it all came sin. And instead of use, we have abuse. Instead of worshiping the Creator, we worship that which is created. Sin is a foreigner, a perversion of what is basically good. It makes people capable of abusing themselves wilfully — even habitually.

Because of this abuse there has developed a religious perversion in the opposite direction where creation itself becomes an object of mistrust. We may get the idea that it is wrong to enjoy what some people abuse. This is a normal and erroneous reaction to sin. It is like the swing of a pendulum. If it goes far to the left, when it begins to come back it will swing past the center to the extreme right. So in reaction to periods when people enjoy God's creation to an abuse, we may find well meaning religious people thinking that enjoyment itself is wrong. The novelist Sir Walter Scott had a very strict puritan father. The story is told that one day at the family table when they were having soup, young Walter was enjoying his with much obvious relish and smacking of the lips. His father's countenance grew more stern than usual. He reached over, picked up the child's bowl, and threw the soup in his face. "Food is meant to eat," he said, "not to enjoy!" This in the name of God! Actually, such an attitude denies the whole doctrine of creation. It contradicts the first article of the Apostle's Creed — that God himself is the maker of heaven and earth. It is a blasphemy against the Creator-God who wants us to enjoy his gifts. In the words of our text, "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the Word of God and prayer."

When we receive with thanksgiving, we consecrate that which we receive. It is consecrated by the Word of God and by prayer. By the Word of God — God's message of redemption by which he brings us into fellowship with him. By prayer — our own exercise of this fellowship in our expression of thanks. St. Paul carried this idea of consecrating by thanksgiving even into the controversial subject of eating meat that had been offered to idols. In the apostolic church some Christians said Christians could buy the meat that had been offered to idols and eat it without any conscience scruples, and some said they could not. Said Paul "If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?"

God desires our common life to be enjoyable. Says the writer of Ecclesiastes, "Every man to whom God has given to accept his lot and find enjoyment in his toil — this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart." From the need for food and family has come the family meal where we eat together as a sign of our fellowship. So our Thanksgiving celebration is in a sense a love feast with as much emphasis on the family ties about the table as the food on the table. The early church also had a love feast — in fact that is what they called it — the love feast. To the need for food and for family was added the need for God. This celebration of feasting as the family of God climaxed in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Here food in terms of bread and wine became the means of joining each to the other and each to God. It was the church family's thanksgiving meal. For this reason one of the earliest names for the Lord's Supper was the Eucharist, which means the Thanksgiving.

II

God has made the common life sacramental. The idea of the word *sacrament* is that earthly things become sacred when they serve to communicate heavenly gifts. When we think of the sacraments we think of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Here Christ has chosen elements of this world of creation — water, bread, and wine — to bring to us the heavenly elements, forgiveness and salvation, the body and blood of Christ. By their very composition the sacraments indicate the scope of Christ's redemptive activity. It extends to the whole realm of creation. From this basic idea of the sacraments in baptism and the Lord's Supper, the sacramental idea extends outward for the Christian into life as a whole. In a sense the Christian sees through the earthly to the heavenly in all of life. In the material things he receives the spiritual. We can see this in Luther's familiar explanation to the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." "God indeed gives daily bread to all men, even to the wicked without our prayer," says Luther, "but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge our daily bread as His gift, and to receive it with thanksgiving."

In daily bread — the creation — we see God the Creator. The created thing — the common life — brings about the experience of fellowship with God. That which brings about this fellowship with God through the common life is thanksgiving itself. In receiving our daily bread we are moved to give thanks, and giving thanks to God is an act of fellowship with God. So we see the role of nature, of the common life, as a means for bringing

about the expression of thanksgiving. Growing in the Christian life means growing in the spontaneity with which we participate in the common activities of life — all of them — with thanksgiving. So we acknowledge him, we receive him, in all our ways. No wonder Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see."

But we do not always see them. And this is our tragedy, that we become shortsighted and in the doldrums of daily routine see only the things and not God in and through the things. This is the curse of our secularized way of living — thinking and feeling and acting as though there were no God — meeting life with a harried frown instead of joy. We lose all the marvel and wonder in life — seeing so little in what we see, because we are looking for so little and missing so much. Instead of each day being a fresh adventure with God, it can become a matter of putting in time and getting it over with, seeking some little dash of entertainment to stall off boredom.

We are living longer today, but not necessarily living fuller. "What doth it profit a man if he adds ten years to his life if he isn't really living anyhow!" A young mother who was stricken with an incurable disease wrote an article in one of our Iowa magazines in which she said that she never enjoyed her family so much as when she knew she was going to die. In our blindness even the family meal may miss its sacredness and enjoyment and become the occasion for petty bickering and complaining, giving indigestion not only to the body but to the soul. We peevishly find fault with the members of our family because they do not fit into our preconceived notions of what should and should not be and we leave no room for the larger vision of God and what he may see and desire. All of this when we could be enjoying them and loving them as gifts of God.

Even our worship life is affected with this nearsightedness. So often we are too scattered to concentrate — too concerned about everything else to enjoy and experience the presence of God. Like Martha in the New Testament we are cumbered with so many things and missing out on the one thing needful — concerned about goals that are selling us short. We can become so filled with regrets over the past and fears about the future that we never really live in the present, never really live now. We become disturbed about things of little moment and blind to the real opportunities for doing good all about us. Why should we have guilt and anxiety-ridden souls when God has offered us freedom and peace? Why should we fill up with envy and resentment when, if we trusted in God, we could be showing instead both love and understanding to other people? Life slips away; to what have we devoted it? How much potential good have we squeezed out of each moment, redeeming the time, for the days are evil? But thanks be to God, every present moment becomes a new opportunity. We do not have to stay the way we are. Every present moment has eternal significance because God has redeemed it through Christ. God calls us *now* to a higher life. "Behold *now* is the accepted time." Behold *now* is the only time we really have.

Doing something religious is not confined to attending church or having daily devotions, as necessary as these are. The daily task and the daily life are filled with religious significance. For the Christian there is no boundary line between so-called religious activities and nonreligious activities. For the Christian all of life is religious, every experience a means of receiving from God. Everything in life can be a revelation, every opportunity a means for doing good. He has a message for us in all that comes our way. He that hath ears to hear let him hear what God would say to him in the present moment — now! He that hath eyes to see let him see God in the created world — now! He that hath faith to recognize the hand of God in the present moment, let him give thanks! For it is this common life that is the stimulus for thanksgiving, for God has redeemed it. It is a childlike faith and best expressed in a childlike way.

> This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
> All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres. . . .
> This is my Father's world, He shines in all that's fair;
> In the rustling grass I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.*

He speaks to me everywhere only because he speaks to me somewhere! He has spoken to me in Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. He speaks to me in his Word — the Bible. He meets me at his altar in the sacrament. And through these means he lives within.

> "Break forth, my soul, for joy, and say,
> What wealth is come to me this day!
> My Savior dwells within me now:
> How blest am I! How good art Thou!"

* "This Is My Father's World," from *Thoughts for Everyday Living* by Maltbie D. Babcock. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.)

Thoughts on Preaching

✚ JOHN WATSON (Ian Maclaren) said that the lack of literary distinction in dealing with majestic ideas is "a species of profanity. It is an act of intellectual indecency."

✚ THE FLORENTINES flattered Savonarola until they found he meant business, then they burnt him. — *Dean Inge*

✚ IT REQUIRES as much reflection and wisdom to know what is not to be put into a sermon, as what is. — *Richard Cecil*

✚ THE power of a sermon lies in its structure, not in its decoration. — *Halford E. Luccock*

What God Gives

By William Archer Wright, Jr.

Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creation.
James 1:17-18.

ONE does not think of politicians as poets, but listen to this opening paragraph of the 1938 Thanksgiving Day proclamation of Wilbur Cross, then governor of Connecticut:

> As the colors of Autumn stream down the wind, scarlet in sumach and maple, spun gold in the birches, a splendor of smoldering fire in the oaks along the hill, and the last leaves flutter away, the dusk falls briefly about the worker bringing in from the field a late load of its fruit, and Arcturus is lost to sight and Orion swings upward that great sun upon his shoulder, we are stirred once more to ponder the Infinite Goodness that has set apart for us, in all this moving mystery of creation, a time of living and a home. In such a spirit I appoint Thursday, the 24th of November, a day of public Thanksgiving.

There is a poetic cosiness about Thanksgiving that our other national holidays do not have. New Year's is a time of revelry. Easter is a peculiarly religious festival. Memorial Day is sad. The Fourth of July is a restless, flag-waving day. And we have wrecked Christmas with commercialism. But Thanksgiving is different. Brisk fall weather on the outside and good food and good company indoors, and nothing to do but enjoy it all.

Thanksgiving combines what is genuinely patriotic — appreciation for our national heritage and for the opportunities of life here — with what is genuinely religious: thanksgiving to God that the good things of our life come from him.

So this holiday has come to be a time for counting our blessings. And as we look at other parts of the world, we realize how many blessings of a material nature we have. We live in a veritable paradise of gadgets. No other nation in the world has the luxury items we take for granted. The wealthy may have them the world over, but what belongs only to the very rich elsewhere belongs to almost everyone in the United States. Even our poor are rich in comparison with the starving and disease-ridden people of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. We are a favored land.

The Declaration of Independence says that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are among the "unalienable" rights of mankind. We still possess them while in many parts of the world they have been taken away. Indeed they have never belonged at all to a majority — *a majority* — of the world's population. We have them; and we thank God for them.

God's Greater Gift

But any kind of a god could give these things. Let me explain that statement. The god of the deist, the gods of the pagans, the gods of heathen demon worshipers give such things. At least their worshipers give them credit for it. Anyone who sees a power beyond himself and his world would give thanks for such gifts as these.

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ does far more than this for mankind. We ought to thank God for our material blessings, but we must not stop there. If we stop with material blessings we may begin to think of God as a kind of arbitrary power who gives some things and withholds some things. And God does not do that at all. God gives everything. Everything needful and worthwhile in life God makes available to us. He withholds nothing we need; and if what is needful does not become ours, it is because the sin of man steps in to separate us from it.

And if we stop with the counting of our material blessings, our thanks are likely to become a proud thanks which are not gratitude at all but a corruption of gratitude. If our *material* blessings are the only things we have in mind, then there is likely to be in the back of our minds the thought that God gives these blessings to some people and not to others. We are likely to become envious of

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others for having more than we do, or proud of ourselves for having more than they.

Furthermore, God does not act that way. We may have more or less than others because of difference in ability. We may have more or less because the sins of man rob some people of what they rightfully ought to have — and we can as easily be among the robbers as among the robbed. But to attribute our inequalities in material blessings or in such things as ability or attractiveness to arbitrary and personal acts of God is entirely wrong.

Available to All

These conditions, even the possibility of sin, are facts of creation. God has made his creation this way. Some of his purposes we can understand. For instance, we can understand that suffering, which we would hardly call a material blessing, can be turned into a blessing by our use of it for spiritual growth. But some of God's purposes we cannot understand. There are some things we must accept merely because there is nothing else to do with them. Yet we cannot believe that God is an arbitrary god who deliberately wills that some people are to be better off or have more than other people. God loves us all with the same love and makes available to all of us alike the resources which we need.

Thus this business of counting our blessings can become a very dangerous spiritual exercise. It is too easy for us to think of the blessings we wish we had and do not. It can lead as easily to envy or pride as it can to gratitude.

Instead of trying to list what God has given us this Thanksgiving, and perhaps thinking all the time about what he has *not* given us, let us try to see what God gives that is uniquely his gift to the world.

The first thing we have to do is to get out of this personal shell of ours. As we have seen, the difficulty in counting our blessings is not so much in our blessings as in ourselves. It is *my* blessings I become interested in, not *yours*. This is not at all the Christian way of looking at God's gifts. It is a clear violation of the second part of the great commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Now this may be an impossible goal for us to attain, but to think of our own blessings in any different light from the way we think of our neighbor's blessings is certainly a violation of this commandment.

What, then, does God give to the world, the world of which we and our neighbors are both a part?

All Comes from God

The answer, of course, is that God gives everything. In the first chapter of the Epistle of James we read, "Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights [that is, of the whole creation] with whom there is no variation [no arbitrariness]." There it is; God gives everything. Nothing is that is not from God. Men can misunderstand God's ways and think some things are inherently evil when, if they were understood aright, these things would be found to be good. Men can take what God has made good and make something evil out of it. But everything we are and have — *everything* — comes from God.

"In God we live and move and have our being." And only as we live, move and find our whole existence in relation to him, can we claim what he gives us as our own. Evil and selfishness come from our corruption of God's blessings. They come from the mistaken notion that things both physical and spiritual — money and love, for instance — belong to us outright. We use them as if we had the right to do with them what we want. But they are God's gifts. And if we do not use them as God wishes evil will come of it. God gives money. At least he gives the economic resources which money represents. But we can corrupt money and make it the instrument of avarice and greed. God gives love. But look at what man can do to love when he treats it as if it were his own possession. It becomes ugly lust and covetousness.

Gratitude for what God gives is not just thanking him for blessings. It is acknowledgment of God as the giver. It is appreciation for the gift itself, not self-congratulation for having it. It is the tender and careful handling of things God has made precious by the very fact that he created them. It involves the dedication of God's blessings to the uses he intended them for. Gratitude is not so much an act of thanksgiving as an attitude toward use; not so much something we do as the spiritual quality of our motives.

Jesus said, "For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" True thanksgiving is not so much counting our blessings as making our blessings count. Real gratitude focuses not so much on the gift as on the giver. And God gives everything.

✚ IT IS NOT a minister's wisdom but his conviction which imparts itself to others. Nothing gives life but life. Real flame alone kindles other flame; this was the power of the apostles: "We believe and therefore speak." Firm faith in what they spoke, that was the basis of the apostles' strength. — *F. W. Robertson*

✚ GENIUS is not essential to good preaching, but a live man is. — *Austin Phelps*

✚ HE WHO THE sword of heaven will bear, should be as holy as severe. — *Shakespeare*

For All Thy Saints

By William Summerscales

Matthew 25:14-30

ALL SAINTS' DAY is the point in the liturgical calendar when we turn our attention to the faithful departed and the meaning of the word "sainthood." Whether those who have died were known and loved by us or not, we stand today in awareness that the church has something to say in the face of death. For Presbyterians, at least, there is a reminder in the "communion of saints" prayers in their *Book of Common Worship.*

We give Thee thanks for all Thy saints, martyrs and confessors; for all the faithful who in every age have witnessed a good confession.

That is to say, Christians never "start from scratch." There is much more involved even on the human side than we are inclined to acknowledge. A long history, a grand tradition, the church under way on the earth preceded the baptism of every one of us. I have often looked at the certificate that tells me I was baptized as an infant in the parish church of Silsden, near Keighley in Yorkshire, England, and tried to imagine what it would be like if this were not so. But that is unreal; it is so. And something like that is so for every one of us. There stands the church with its witness over against each life in the Christian West.

This great company of the faithful "in every age" has been enriched in our branches of the church of Jesus Christ by the Reformers of four centuries ago. To them we pay tribute on this All Saints' Day. Much that is meaningful in our worship and life-giving in our theology stems from their courage and intrepid adventuring. We do them justice not by imitating them but by coming to grips with the problems of our age in the light of Christian faith as they did in their time. Robert McAfee Brown in one of his books reminds us that our call as Christians in reformed churches is not to do as our forebears did unthinkingly. Their lives and times are to be examined with intelligence and discrimination. The obvious illustration is John Calvin's custom of wearing a hat in church while preaching. Calvin wore the hat, it is reported, not because Scripture demanded it but because his church was terribly draughty and there were numerous pigeons.

The richness of our communion of saints is seen in the clear continuity between the church's present and the long history of Israel. Many of our hymns are metrical versions of the Hebrew psalms. A benediction often employed by the church is the Aaronic blessing from the Book of Numbers: "The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace." The regular reading of the Psalms and other sections of the Old Testament reminds us of the way God acted among and spoke to his people Israel, of the glory of his ancient promise and the fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Continuity and communion with the church's past are ours since the Christ-event. The faithful witnessed a good confession so that we have both gospel and epistle — a new testament of God's grace to mankind. This faith delivered to the saints has struggled for expression in confession and creed. None of these will perfectly express the dimensions of our relation to God through Jesus Christ, but how poor we should be without the Apostles' and Nicene creeds through which our faith can be commonly affirmed and expressed!

Christians, you see, can take history seriously and hopefully, because it is in history that God has been at work through the Church. Christians are the people who need never be afraid of history — the history of their own personal drama in birth, life, struggle, joy, and death; or the wider history of nations and peoples awakening to their own

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inherent dignity and potential as creatures made in God's own image. There is a movement in human history, a movement that in our day has manifested the force of a torrential river. There is no escaping it; in some senses it frightens all of us; certainly it threatens the settled patterns of our staid existence. And yet perhaps once more

> The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
> And God fulfills himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

This at any rate: the faithful in every age have witnessed a good confession that Jesus Christ is Lord of history. And those in the communion of the saints live always in joyful hope.

We give Thee thanks for . . . the chosen vessels of Thy grace and the lights of the world, in their several generations.

This is the way we understand the saints in prayer. Yet sometimes the real saints do not yield to our understanding because they do not readily fit our popular patterns for sainthood. We have put the saints into stained glass colors to look down benignly upon quiet congregations. But these were real men and women, with faults, foibles, failures. And how wondrously rich is the variety of their human nature!

Dare we forget how impulsive was Peter, how fiery the apostle John, how prodigal the youthful Augustine, how earthy the great Luther, how stern and stiff John Calvin, how self-forgetful Francis of Assisi, how thundering and dominant John Knox! How foolish we become when we try to narrow the term Christian down to our ten cents' worth of human existence! The word "saint" means "holy," and the word "holy" means that which is whole or complete. Holiness and wholesomeness mean the same thing. When the Bible speaks of holiness it has nothing to do with pale-cheeked otherworldliness. It speaks in this word of the whole person, the health of a genuinely human existence. Tyndale translated the entire Scripture without using the term "salvation." He used "health" in the Old English meaning of a complete human being. "This day is *health* come to this house."

What is more needed amid the paralyzing anxieties, the ennervating fears, the stifling conformities of an unsure generation than to see in the wholeness and health of freed human persons the chosen vessels of God's grace, the lights of the world!

Grant us grace so to follow them as they followed Christ . . . and to Thee be all honor and glory.

When David Livingstone was buried in Westminster Abbey, many eyes were fixed on the Negro who stood at the head of the casket. He was the Zanzibar servant who had brought the beloved missionary's body from the African swamp, asking as his only recompense that he might attend it on its sad journey across the sea. What a contrast, and what a common bond! Livingstone rich in culture, in medical skill, in charm of nature, in broad vision of a world redeemed. The Negro slave with untrained mind and uncultured manner of life — his only talent the ability to follow faithfully in animal-like devotion. Yet the two belonged strangely together, for each obeyed the highest that he knew. Together they followed Christ and each in his own way gave to God "all honor and glory."

The saints differ in a thousand ways. They have one thing in common: they know what it is to obey. The saint is like Christ, "obedient unto death." He knows it is more important to obey God than to seem to succeed. We are closest to sainthood when we are becoming what we are made for. Surely we shall learn that the chief end of man is not discoverable in his ownership of Detroit's latest models, or in the beauty of his gardens, or in the charm of his home. These things may be his to enjoy, but the real meaning of his destiny lies elsewhere.

Nor dare we be satisfied with doing well and keeping things in order. In the parable of the talents the wicked servant expected commendation for his caution and strict honesty. But his hopeful complacency received a rude rebuff: "You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." (Matthew 25:26-30.) The scrupulous servant who took no risks was the one who most seriously failed his Lord.

When on All Saints' Day we remember the faithful departed we recall the ways in which they were enabled to let life be centered in God. And earnestly we say: "Grant us grace to follow them as they followed Christ . . . and to Thee be all honor and glory. Amen."

✚ HOW little does it take to keep *us* from the pastoral round, the administrative duty, the workshop and the hammering out of a good sermon. Charles Wesley once wrote in his diary of being sorely injured by a fall from his horse. The injury, he said, "prevented me writing hymns *till next day*."

Lest Patriotism Become Idolatry

By Everett W. Palmer

Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. . . ." Mark 12:17.

PATRIOTISM is one of the noblest of virtues. At a meeting of the General Conference of the Methodist Church in Denver, we were all stirred by the singing of the Ambassadors, a quartet of fellow Methodists from Southern Rhodesia. Included in their program was the African national anthem. I shall not forget those four black men standing there with faces shining, singing of their love for Africa; singing of its beauty, its hopes and promise, its yearning for status and dreams of freedom!

Love of country! That is indigenous to the human heart. It is as normal as love of home and family. He who does not share a sense of pride in and responsibility for his country, accept obligations in its behalf according to his competence, rejoice in recollection of its heroic past, and enfold all within the warmth and dedication of a loving heart — that man has a soul of straw!

> Breathes there a man with soul so dead
> Who never to himself has said,
> "This is my own, my native land"?

Church, home, and school do well to inculcate patriotism. This is one of the loftiest virtues, essential to personal well-being, imperative for the common good.

Like every virtue, however, patriotism is subject to constant threat of perversion. Love may become the creature of lust, thrift the dungeon of a miser, righteousness the repulsiveness of the Pharisee. So patriotism may become the tool of bigotry and of hate, of arrogance, of gross selfishness. As Samuel Johnson once observed, patriotism may become the "last refuge of a scoundrel."

But the most threatening, destructive, and deceptive perversion of all is this: patriotism may become idolatry. It may be the means by which we glorify and worship ourselves rather than God. It may be the device by which we ascribe divinity to our own aims and ambitions rather than seeking to know and obey God and his laws. It may be the unpardonable insolence by which we would tie God to the tail of our chariot rather than endeavor humbly to walk in his ways. It may be the blasphemy by which we give to the state the throne which alone belongs to Almighty God.

By every count, this is the worst perversion of patriotism. It is a menace in our times as it was in the time of Jesus, in Glendale as it was in Jerusalem. Nearly 30 years ago when Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin first began their strutting on the stage of history, we gave it a name. Totalitarianism, we called it. The term still applies.

Consider now the threat of this perversion of patriotism, especially as it lurks in our own dooryards and in the hiding places of our hearts; and our high calling as Christians to oppose and defeat it.

I

The menace of totalitarianism and the duty of Christians to oppose it is not new, of course. It created life and death decisions for our Lord and those who first were known as Christians. It nailed Christ on his cross and sent early Christians through the fires of cruel persecution and martyrdom. The gospel together with the opening chapters of Christian history are interwoven by the conflict between Caesar and Christ, state and church.

Basically, the question was: What is the nature of the state as an institution and what are the limits of its power? Where does the state begin to assume prerogatives which belong only to God? When does it begin to ask of men what they should give to God? In a word, where does patriotism cease to be a virtue and become vile? When does patriotism become idolatry?

Christians, beginning with Christ himself, recognized and supported the just claims of the state.

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They honored the state as an institution willed of God for man's good. They upheld its function as an instrument of co-operation in service of the common good, providing maintenance of law and order, support of justice and freedom, and such administration of public affairs as are essential for security and the general welfare. They believed it their duty to give the state support essential to its being and rightful purpose as a servant of God for man. "Render to Caesar," said Jesus, "the things that are Caesar's." "Be subject," wrote Paul, "to the governing authorities . . ." (Romans 13:1). Christians were urged to pray for "kings and all who are in high positions, that [they] may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way" (Timothy 2:2).

But though they recognized the state as willed of God for man's good, they did not ascribe divinity to it! They did not regard it as final and supreme. Rather, they viewed the state as made of man and as such temporal, subject to universal moral laws, under judgment of Almighty God. Should the state forget this, as did ancient Rome, and claim for itself the prerogatives of God, seeking to control man's mind and conscience, asserting authority over the souls of men, then they regarded the state not as a servant of God but as an instrument of the devil, a monstrous beast from the pit, even as the writer of the Apocalypse described Rome.

"Render unto Caesar," said Jesus, "the things that are Caesar's" — that is, the money and service essential to the state's existence. But render "to God the things that are God's": your will, your soul, your thoughts, your heart, your supreme loyalty and devotion, your life!

In loyalty to this principle early Christians resisted the idolatrous pretensions and totalitarian demands of a pagan state, resisted at the cost of banishment, torture, and death. But the victory they won established foundations of human dignity, rights of the individual, and freedom.

II

Now, after the long centuries, once again idolatrous claims are made in behalf of the state. Once again there are those who would give the state the throne which alone belongs to Almighty God. Once again there are those who in the name of patriotism would practice idolatry, who would make of a noble virtue a shameful perversion. Once again the church and we as individual Christians are being called upon to make a choice and take the consequences.

We Americans have seen the grosser forms of totalitarianism in both fascism and communism. We have recognized in them the beast and shuddered in loathing. But in our fever to achieve security against the threat of communist imperialism, many unwittingly would invite totalitarianism in another guise to rule over us. In the name of patriotism and security they would make God into our own image. Without thought of soul-searching and repentance, they would claim God for "our side." They would ascribe divinity to our aims and achievements, our "way of life." Some would even ask the church to swear loyalty to the state.

As Karl Barth has reminded us, the lion of opposition to Christian values, so apparent to our eyes as we view the communist world, likewise is on the prowl among us in our chauvinism and moral flabbiness. American identification of its will to power with the will of God is quite as monstrous as the Marxist denial of God. Both issue from the perversion of patriotism into idolatry.

We need to remember that patriotism which deifies the state in the end destroys the state. It makes for the arrogance of assuming the state has the right to be a law unto itself and thus invites selfish and irresponsible action by which a state is vanquished by its own victories. It regards criticism of and protests against national policy as unpatriotic and identifies loyalty with conformity. Thus it perpetuates error and hastens the state toward self-ruin. It celebrates the prophets, reformers, and revolutionaries of generations past, but regards such people of the present as suspect, a dangerous breed to be labeled as subversive and suppressed. So it glorifies the status quo and invites death by decay. Patriotism which makes an idol of the state betrays and destroys the state. Thus, many a man who secretly prides himself upon being a super-patriot is not a patriot, but an enemy of his nation. Patriotism which deifies the state in the end destroys the state. History is a witness!

Also, we need to remember that no system of government will long honor the restraints which guarantee freedom and dignity for the individual and the integrity of nonpolitical institutions serving the common good, unless that government bows in allegiance to higher laws than its own self-interest and to a Higher Power than its own will.

Freedom is secure, justice is maintained, and truth is honored only as there stands in the midst of men an institution (the church) neither subservient to nor controlled by the state; only as there is a free and unintimidated voice speaking for Almighty God — in his name opposing error and evil, in his name promoting righteousness; only as there are people who will stand up and say we "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God, the things that are God's"; only then is freedom honored, justice sustained, and truth served.

Hence, the church must never bow in fealty to any state or nation, culture, or system of government. Her supreme loyalty belongs to God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and to him alone. Hence, Christians must never give to the state in the name

(Continued on page 31)

Peace of Mind Music

By Charles M. Fisher

RECENTLY on our campus an address was given on the subject: "Peace of Mind Is for the Birds." I was impressed by a somewhat different slant on a certain biblical passage familiar to all: "Consider the lilies, the beasts of the fields, the birds of the air . . . Be not anxious therefore, . . ." The point of the address was that it is all very well for the birds and the beasts not to be anxious, but man is another creature and can be expected to have anxieties if he has moral concerns; so "peace of mind is for the birds."

Of course there are certain ambiguities here; what the Christian religion is saying to man, I believe, is: "Be not anxious, in spite of your concerns," which is positive and challenging, not evasive or reminiscent of Pollyanna.

In thinking of this idea, however, I couldn't help relating it to music as we so often find it in church and as many of our congregation want it — "peace of mind" music, that is, music in a familiar idiom, music that is comfortable, reminiscent, emotionally nostalgic. I can think of no better way to say it than that this kind of music is "for the birds." Let *them* sing it!

What music is in this category? Certainly much of the church music of the Victorian era and the early part of this century, but also much that is being written today. For example, you might have heard at Christmas time a song used on a popular religious broadcast called "Put Christ Back into Christmas" — a wonderful idea, but as one listened to the music he should have been aware that it was an old acquaintance best forgot so far as sacred music is concerned: it was set in the idiom of a "pop" love song.

Here are some titles listed under *Songs of Faith*, a collection assembled by a leading publisher, which give away their content: "Everyone Must Have a Friend to Tell His Troubles To," "You Ain't Got Faith Till You Got Religion," "Riding the Range for Jesus." These may not appear in your church bulletin, but unless the minister or the minister of music is very discriminating it is likely that some equally inappropriate music is to be heard in your church service, even though its title may sound more respectable.

The answer to the question, "Who shall defend the church from such music?" (or from any other form of peace of mind music) is *the minister of the church.* He is the only one who can. Through the conducting of many church music workshops, I have found that church musicians are quick to respond to the plea for better standards of music for worship. But again and again they add: "You are talking to the wrong crowd. What can we do if our minister goes along with the requests for sensational music or old favorites in the service?"

Almost invariably when asked about the character of their minister's sermons, music directors acknowledge that the preaching is erudite and challenging. Why then, do those ministers remain philistines in regard to music in their church? They would not think of leaving their theology on the level of understanding they had in the Sunday school of their youth, yet they are content to leave the music which their congregation sings and hears on that very level, using the defense that this is the music the people know and want. Surely no minister with integrity preaches only what the congregation knows and wants to hear. Good music, like good sermons, should not only comfort the afflicted, but afflict the comfortable.

Too often ministers consider the music in their churches to be a sort of ecclesiastical flypaper which catches and holds congregations by means of its sticky, sweet attraction. How can this point of view be justified? Most of these same ministers would not use the pulpit as a platform for enter-

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tainment, plying the congregation with personal prattle and amusing anecdote, even though they might think such a performance would be well received.

Just as the pulpit must function as a source of stimulation for praise, reverence, challenge and aspiration, so also must the choir loft if it is to serve the purpose of the Christian religion.

For those who are not avowed authorities on church music and are open-minded on the subject I would make a few suggestions on how to recognize music that is worthy for worship:

First, we might well leave it to the trained musician to evaluate from the technical standpoint the suitability of an anthem or a hymn so far as such musical considerations as good voice leading, appropriate harmony, musical stature, difficulty, vocal range, and so on are concerned. Certainly we would avoid music which will elicit such commentary as the following, concerning the tune "Bangor" from the Scottish Psalter:

> O Bangor's notes are unco high and try the lassies sair!
> They pech an' grane an Skirl an Skriech
> Till they can sing nae maer.
> The high, high notes o' Bangor's tune are unco sair to raise;
> An trying hard to reach them gars
> The lassies burst their stays.[1]

If your choir director is not qualified sufficiently in the area of musical judgment, it might be greatly to the advantage of your church to send him each year, on scholarship, to one of the many fine church music workshops which are being conducted throughout the country. In any case, he needs the co-operation and backing of the minister in selecting music which is of stature and suitability from a technical, musical standpoint.

We might well keep in mind for all church music the questions Edith Lovell Thomas asks in regard to selecting music for junior choirs:

> 1. What will serve [the people] best and what ministers to their growth in Christian character?
> 2. What is true for [a congregation] according to their experience, desire, capacity? [Not what is pretty, sweet or pious.]
> 3. What appeals to genuine feelings of gladness, amazement, wistfulness, enthusiasm? [Not "goody goody" or merely sentimental songs.]
> 4. What furnishes substance to mold into worthy concepts of "One whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts?" [Not conventional phrases to be mouthed only, but convictions that cost when lived up to.]
> 5. What develops individuality, independence, an inner self-reliance, Christian integrity? [Not rubber stamp or surface religion.]
> 6. What provides power to give oneself to work with-and-for others in the Christian cause? [Not contentment with saying, but putting purpose into action.][2]

Taste, judgment, and the particular situation will affect choices, so words and music selected will vary widely, and thus it should be. We need not worry about conformity in using these criteria.

In selecting music for any service of worship, there are further considerations which should be taken into account. Canon Winfred Douglas asserts: "If the anthem is to benefit the congregation, whose participation is passive rather than active, . . . it must be a musical meditation on high and holy things; not an entertainment for wealthy persons who hire the singers for their own pleasure. . . . Corruptions of the divine service may not be excused, however amiable may be the intentions of the persons concerned. Choose and permit only such anthems as may be a worthy offering to God."[3]

Still, you may ask, what attributes of a piece of music determine its worthiness, its appropriateness? We could use many relative terms which should apply, such as dignity, stateliness, strength, sincerity, vitality, and so on, but these are not specific and we will not all agree on their application to an individual musical work.

One specific test, however, is that of association. It has been said that the great value of plainsong as a medium for sacred music lies in the fact that it is a pure church idiom; it has no counterpart in secular music. In other words, it carries no secular associations with it into the sanctuary. Since it originated and developed entirely within the framework of the liturgical chant, its style, texture, and rendition bring to mind only the high and holy whenever it is well sung.

For example, contrast the hymn "Of the Father's Love Begotten" to the tune "Divinum Mysterium,"[4] which is based on plainsong, with "O Happy Day" to the tune "Happy Day"[5] from the standpoint of association. Even if it were true, as it may be in the latter case, that the tune was first associated with the church and then became secularized as the tune for "How Dry I Am," it has lost its validity as a vehicle for worship because of the stronger secular association in our present culture.

Present society, that is, our contemporary culture and all within it which carries secular associations, must always be taken into consideration. Martin Luther found this out when, desiring "songs for the people" at the time of the Reformation, he brought into the church secular tunes currently well known and set sacred words to them. He soon discovered that these tunes did not prove suitable, because the people were not able to disregard the secular association of the melodies. So he turned to composing original chorale tunes, tunes which we have come to associate entirely with the church.

The same music may be satisfactory church music in one culture and not in another (here I speak of culture both chronologically and socio-

[1] Millar Patrick in *Four Centuries of Scottish Psalmody* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950). Used by permission.

[2] Adapted from Edith Lovell Thomas in *Music in Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press). Used by permission.

[3] Winfred Douglas in *Church Music in History and Practice* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons). Used by permission.

[4] *Hymnal 1940* (Episcopal).

[5] *The Methodist Hymnal.*

logically). It is a fact that in the early folk culture of our country, religious experience was found through the medium of spirituals and revival tunes. The same thing is true even in some unsophisticated cultures today. But in the enlightened culture represented in most of the churches throughout the country today this music has more secular than liturgical associations. Obviously, association is one of the elements which makes questionable the use of the "jazz mass" in a service of worship.

It is possible to claim that typical Victorian anthems, such as those of Shelly and Maunder, can still bring a spiritual message to some older people in our congregations. But for most members the harmonic and melodic clichés of this music are now associated primarily with "moon-June" love songs and barber shop quartet music. They are no longer valid in the church.

However, I believe that in speaking of Victorian Romanticism in music as well as the jazz idiom, we must condemn their use in the church on grounds other than just that of association. Such music is inherently emotional; it can create irresponsible emotionalism and an unreal sense of well-being — the ultimate prostitution of the art of music. Erik Routley writes of Victorian music: "Here the church has debased music to the limit. [Its] vice is sentimentality — emotional content backed up by no solid truth, a show of feeling with no intention of consequent honesty. . . . Music designed to create mere natural emotion, such as sorrow or pity or peace of mind, at least has animal content, but this hack music of the church, designed to produce, not natural emotion, but (the good Lord spare us) Religious Emotion, this is music at its lowest ebb."[6]

We must look more deeply into the music we use and consider the effect it may have on those who hear it. Music must not soothe and console unless it also ennobles and leads to aspiration. Church music must challenge; it must strengthen; it must produce humility from which resolve may come forth. Music and words which do not mutually promote these reactions have no place in the service of worship. Good music *in church* is so much more important than good music elsewhere because it is in the religious context that man's conscience is raw, that the judgment of the Word beats in upon him. If music and the Word help him face this judgment with penitence and a new intent, the result is creative; it has the possibility of making him a new creature. But if music and the Word make him react with self-satisfaction, pride, peace of mind and contentment, it is corruptive; it may lead him to wallow in an unreal sense of well-being which will smother all possibility of growth toward a new being.

In the final choice of church music, no other category than the theological will provide sound ground for judgment. It is important that we learn to appreciate, to understand and to criticize with discrimination all music we intend to use in church, and to discard it unless it will give dignity to its users and hearers and will exalt the spirit of man.

It is important that we choose music which will awaken listeners to their spiritual needs rather than just give pleasure, music which will inspire rather than pacify or entertain. We cannot use as a basis for selecting music the argument that it is pretty, or easy, or sure to thrill the congregation, or will make a hit with the choir at first reading — or even that it will garner praise for the choir or the church. We all know that sensationalism in church music can elicit this last response, but its superficiality can never be a substitute for the reality of what we know to be worthy music. Our music must lead the worshiper to God, not to nostalgia or any other kind of emotional jag. If the morning anthem or its rendition is greatly praised, we might well suspect that God was not. Music that calls attention to itself is suspect.

Has a member of your congregation ever made such a comment as this concerning the worship service: "Your music was wonderful this morning; it led me to the throne of God"? No, and one probably never will, because that experience is generally too personal to discuss in the social atmosphere of the church foyer. However, I'm sure you *have* often heard such compliments as "Your music was thrilling this morning; it made my spine tingle" or "It brought tears to my eyes." So what?

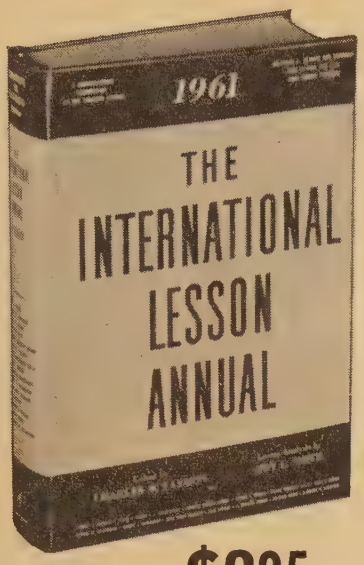
It is hard not to be impressed by compliments like these, but if we can keep our true purpose in mind we can only thank those who offer them and question the advisability of repeating such music.

Music must carry its full and proper share of the responsibility for providing goals toward which the church can help the world move — toward the goals of beauty, of creative thinking, of individuality and imagination, of self-imposed discipline, of profundity instead of shallowness, of critical evaluation, of joyous preoccupation with the world of Christian ideas and ideals, of concern for the well-being of our fellows, of persuading the immature to choose that which is fine and exquisite and unique rather than that which is coarse or banal. Only in this way can we fulfill what Albert Schweitzer calls "our obligation to tomorrow."

I am convinced that it is the responsibility of the minister to see that music used in his church is such that it can serve its true function. If he is to fulfill the roll of the spiritual shepherd of his congregation, he must be as concerned about the worthwhile musical content of the service as he is about the worthwhile content of his sermon; for music is his strongest and most subtle ally in bridging that mysterious chasm between the finite and infinite for the worshiping congregation.

[6] Erik Routley in *The Church and Music* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.). Used by permission.

The International Lesson Annual 1961



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Notes on Invocations and Benedictions

By Albert G. Minda

EVERY clergyman can relate a number of experiences he has had in giving invocations and benedictions at every possible type of meeting or public dinner. I thought I had run the gamut until I was requested to give the invocation at a dinner of ex-pugilists. As I stood before the gentry of flattened nose and cauliflower ear, I reflected how relevant to the occasion was the traditional Hebrew blessing of thanks:

> Praised be Thou, O Lord
> Our God, Ruler of the Universe,
> who has kept us alive,
> preserved us and permitted
> us to reach this day.

Some of us, likewise, have been in the position of the late William Allen White, the liberal Republican editor of the *Emporia* (Kansas) *Gazette,* who was in the press box at a state convention of the Democrats at Kansas City, Mo. The presiding chairman, the late Senator James Reed, after looking around, stated that since he could discover no clergyman present, he would ask his friend Bill White to pronounce the invocation. To this, the sage of Emporia replied: "No, thank you, Mr. Chairman, but I would just as soon that the Lord would not even know I was here."

The matter of invocations, however, cannot be dismissed lightly. After listening to clergymen of all denominations give invocations and benedictions at events ranging from the inaugural of a President of the United States to my own misdirected efforts at the last meeting of the men's club, I have come to certain conclusions which may be helpful, at least to younger colleagues.

To whom should the invocation be directed? Some years back, a Boston newspaper in reporting a certain meeting, said: "The Rev. Dr. .... delivered the finest invocation ever directed to a Boston audience."

Who Is Addressed?

This is true in many other instances. The invocation, instead of being directed to God, seems to be spoken to the audience. This manifests itself in several ways. The clergyman, fearful that the main speaker will not cover his assigned subject adequately, proceeds in his invocation to give a speech himself. He starts out by addressing the Lord and then forgets Him as he holds forth to the assembled audience.

Sometimes he feels that the audience lacks certain historical data and uses the invocation as a medium of total recall. Years ago, a beloved personality in giving invocations on historic occasions at the Hebrew Union College would each time remind the Lord when Isaac Mayer Wise came to America, when he founded the college, its humble beginnings, and the steps of its subsequent growth.

I have heard some clergymen at the inaugural of the President of the United States take the national TV and radio audience into their confidence as they submitted a program of national policy unto the Most High.

I submit that all this does not represent the import and purport of an invocation. If the one who invokes God's presence and blessing really means it, then all else follows simply and logically. He does not use the invocation to preach or lecture, or to offer a spoken meditation.

Necessary Elements

An invocation should consist of three elements:

(1) Thanks to God for the occasion and the cause to which it is dedicated;

(2) A statement of inadequacy for which divine strength is asked and a plea of pardon for shortcomings;

(3) Humbly asking the sanction and blessing of the Almighty in the furtherance of the works of heart and hand which, we prayerfully hope, represent the implementation of His holy will.

Every invocation need not necessarily include all these elements. In any

---

ALBERT G. MINDA *has been rabbi of Temple Israel, Minneapolis, since 1922. He was graduated from the University of Cincinnati and ordained at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, from which institution he received the doctor of divinity degree. Dr. Minda is vice president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the author* of Over the Years *and* Speak to the Heart.

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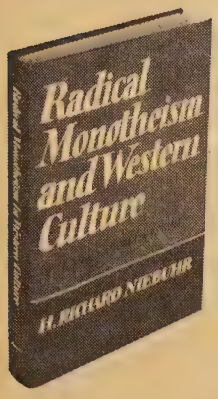

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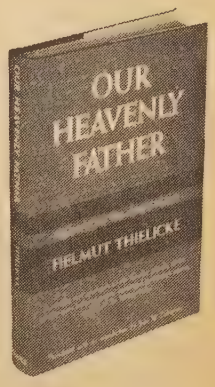

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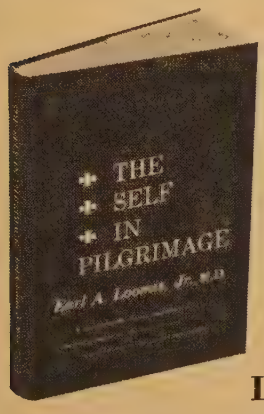

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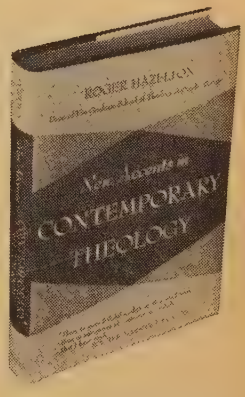

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case, the invocation should be brief and articulate — expressing not merely what is in the heart of the invoker but the sentiments of the people in whose behalf the clergyman prays, as well.

What "brief" means in terms of minutes he must decide for himself. In general, it may be said that it signifies that minute or second of time when one can hear the shuffling of tired feet and the inner grumbling of those who expected an "Amen" at certain well-defined points in the invocation, but which never came until long thereafter.

The sense of humility with which one invokes is indicated in the voice. When one appears with an urgent petition before a sovereign of flesh and blood he does not speak in a voice used in oratory or Shakespearean drama. How much the more should one speak to the King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, in a voice which, according to the prophet, He himself speaks; namely, "the still small voice." The voice used in the invocation is the immediate cue as to whether the clergyman has God — rather than the audience — uppermost in his mind.

As to benedictions, I have noted that my Christian colleagues content themselves with merely reciting the threefold priestly blessing or a benediction derived from their liturgy. There is no attempt in the benediction to summarize the address of the occasion or to give a new one. This is a wise procedure. A benediction is a statement of dismissal asking the blessing of God as the people go forth, even as it attended them in their coming. Unless there are unusual circumstances, anything else becomes a superfluity which adds little and may detract much.

The question is raised here as to whether it must always be the minister who is called upon to give the invocation or benediction at these public occasions. The Minnesota Rabbinical Association has issued a statement urging that laymen also be vested with this privilege and responsibility.

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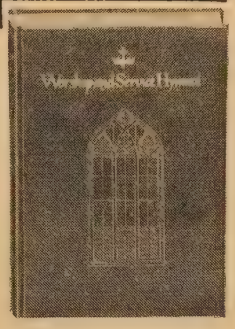
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Book Reviews

THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE. *By Alfred T. DeGroot. Bethany. $4.00.*

THIS book represents a thorough, scholarly, and perhaps to the average reader somewhat labored study of the Restoration [or "Reformation"] Principle which gave birth to a new Christian denomination in America in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Disciples of Christ. Although the writer traces the outcroppings and frequent literary expressions of this basic principle through various periods in church history before and after the Protestant Reformation and documents his findings with exhaustive quotations from many authoritative sources, he reveals some personal denominational bias in ascribing the most effective and reliable application of this principle (which has actually been common to and claimed by many denominations) to his own particular communion, the Disciples of Christ. As he reviews the actual divisions even within his own denomination, his own honesty and more objective scholarship do lead him, however, to recognize the fact that most, if not all, Protestant denominations lay strong claim to their individual stand on original New Testament church precedent and authority.

Dr. DeGroot faces up to such inevitable questions as the following, which few would dare answer with dogmatic certainty: What was the New Testament church actually like in all details of doctrine, practice, and polity? Were all individual New Testament churches exactly alike in every detail? Is conformity to the outward forms of New Testament Christianity the basis of our common hope for Christian unity and peaceful co-operation in any age, or is it the emulation of the spirit of Christ himself, who is the only head of the church and its only life? Where the spirit of Christ prevails, is there not latitude for a great amount of individual freedom demanding mutual respect? — *James M. Gregory, Woodlawn Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Ala.*

GOD'S UNFOLDING PURPOSE. *By Suzanne de Dietrich. Translated by Robert McAfee Brown. Westminster. $4.50.*

THE ENDURING MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE. *By L. Harold DeWolf. Harper. $2.75.*

THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE. *By S. Vernon McCasland. Crowell. $5.95.*

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If Miss de Dietrich's work is adapted to the slow, painstaking study of the minister or exceptionally studious layman, *The Enduring Message of the Bible* can be recommended to the enquiring young person or the lay reader who seeks "a guide to the key ideas of Scripture." Professor DeWolf writes with characteristic winsomeness and lucidity, producing a swift bird's-eye view, "in liberal perspective," "of the world, God, man, history and human destiny" as the Bible conveys it to the man of the twentieth century — "with a minimum of academic fuss and bother." Dr. DeWolf calls attention to the "incidental value" that, in the course of this swift tracing of central ideas, every book of the Bible is "introduced." Attempting so much in slightly more than a hundred pages, he must confine these "introductions" within such severe limits that the Psalms, for instance, receive half a dozen lines. In spite of such compression, the work achieves much through its sense of unfolding and continuing dialog between God and man. For thoughtful beginning readers in the field, it can be a notable experience.

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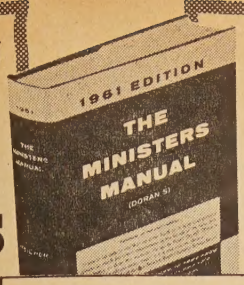

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Two contrasting attitudes toward life, submitted by James M. Howard, Fort Pierce, Florida:

"Only dreamers believe there is a way out. Optimism is cowardice. We are born into this time and must bravely follow the path to the predestined end. There is no other way. Our duty is to hold on to our lost position, without hope, without rescue, like that Roman soldier whose bones were found in Pompeii, who during the eruption of Vesuvius, died at his post because they forgot to relieve him. That is greatness. That is what it means to be a thoroughbred. The honorable end is the one thing that cannot be taken from men." — *Oswald Spengler*

"I don't feel sure about many things, least of all about myself. But there are a few certainties between which I march like a sentinel on ground firm and definitely conquered. One of them is that life at heart is good and is worth its cost in pain and suffering. A second is that the reason for this is that it is love which gives its real meaning to life, and love is the ultimate certainty. And the third is that all this simply means that God is love. Few, but sufficient, is it not? It's a faith that is too simple to get entangled, and that is verified by all experience." — *John Kelman, in a personal letter to a friend, published in the 'British Weekly' at the time of his death.*

Rose Marie Oswald Barth, writing of Karl Barth, said, "Why must he always swim 'against the stream'? I think it is because the stream is what it is: a broad mass that blindly follows the trend, bound to the law of gravity, wallowing toward a great future: annihilation in the ocean." — *'The Christian Century,' March 25, 1959, p. 352.*

"Strange philosophers are these, who, denying that life could have been created through any other intelligence, yet strive tediously in their earthly laboratories, convinced that their own is capable of the feat." — *From 'This World of Living Things.' Copyright 1959 by Paul Griswold Howes. Duell, Sloan and Pearce** — Submitted by Mrs. A. W. Geigley, Fairfield, Pa.

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Lest Patriotism Become Idolatry

(Continued from page 19)

of patriotism that which alone belongs to God. They must never permit the state to suppress their right to think and speak in freedom. They must never permit the state exemption from their right to criticize and correct it. They must never permit the state to rule their conscience nor prescribe their worship of God. We Christians readily give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. But we insist there is One above Caesar before whom even Caesar must bow, and to whom we and Caesar owe supreme loyalty.

For this cause Christ went to his cross. For this cause early Christians suffered martyrdom. For this cause Christians chose to suffer and die under Hitler. For this cause Christians now are vilified by chauvinists and demagogues in America.

Through allegiance to this principle Christians in the past have been hated, slandered, hunted, imprisoned, tortured, and killed. But because there have been such lionhearted people, we have today the freedom and dignity we enjoy as citizens of this land, the treasure we call democracy. Through allegiance to this principle America was founded and under its aegis she has grown in greatness.

Often somewhere on the high seas, a brother of mine, a chaplain of the United States navy, conducts religious services. On such occasions two flags fly from the mast: one the flag of the nation, the other the flag of God. And the flag of God flies above that of the nation. This custom has been the strength and glory of America, the bulwark of our freedom. This is a nation under God, not a nation above God. "Under God, the people rule."

Patriotism is one of the noblest virtues. It is essential to our personal well-being, imperative for the common good. But like every virtue, patriotism may be perverted until what is done in its name is shameful and vicious. It may become a tool of bigotry and hate, of cruel pride and gross selfishness. But more to be feared, it may become idolatry.

This is a menace whose ugliness long ago fashioned a cross. We easily recognize it in the banner of the hammer and sickle. Let us be sure to recognize it as it lurks in our own dooryards and in the hiding places of our hearts.

Our Lord gives us the defense required: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

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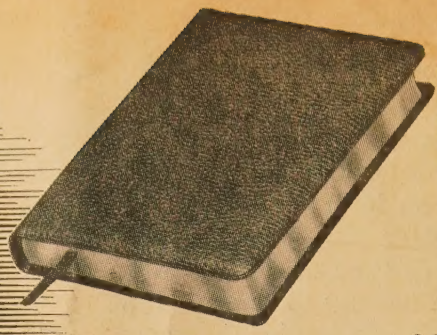

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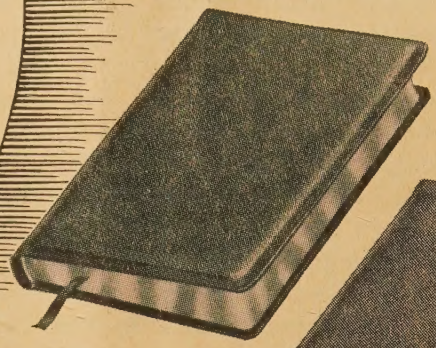

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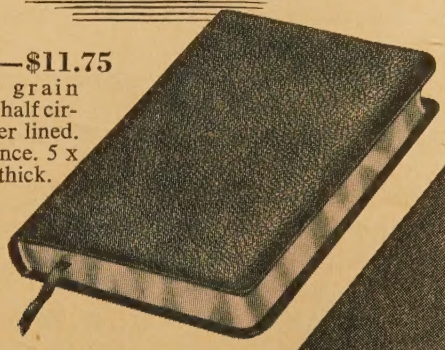

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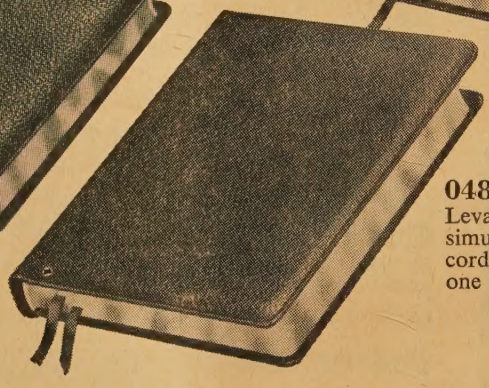

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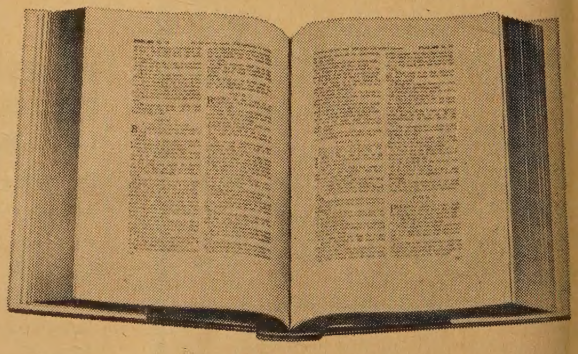

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